

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Graduate School of Education
Decision Analysis I

Assignment #3 – Demonstration Task

New Jersey School Report Card

Introduction

The New Jersey Report Card Database includes report card data for various years. For this project you will examine New Jersey Report Card data for 2005-2006. To locate these data, pull up on the New Jersey School Report Card file for 2006-07 (not 2005-06).

The New Jersey Report Card file for 2006-07 can be found at the following site: <http://education.state.nj.us/rc/rc07/database.htm>. Firstly, you must download the New Jersey Report Card for 2006-07 to your computer or flash drive. You can download the data file in Excel format either zipped or unzipped. If your computer has decompression software, you can download the file as zipped and open it later. Otherwise, you may download the file already unzipped which will take a little longer to download. Secondly, when you visit the above site, please review the Data Layout in Excel. The Data Layout shows how the New Jersey Report Card data file for 2006-07 is organized.

Once you open the Data Layout, click on the tabs along the bottom of the page to review the contents of the New Jersey Report Card data file for 2006-07. Click again on the first tab at the far left of the page to find a list of sub-files that are contained in the New Jersey Report Card data file for 2006-07. Also click on the assessment tab and you will find a list of variable names on the assessment sub-file. These variable names are located in the first column called Field. Variables names are placed as column headings in Excel. Notice how the first three columns of the New Jersey School Report Card data file for 2006-07 contain indicators for County, District, and School, to uniquely identify every public school in New Jersey.

Finally, close the Data Layout to which you may return later for reference as needed and open the downloaded New Jersey Report Card for 2006-07 (nj_rc07.xls). The New Jersey Report Card for 2006-07 in Excel should look familiar because you have worked with many similar files already. If you have a problem opening the New Jersey Report Card for 2006-07 please notify the instructor. Otherwise, continue with the project

The New Jersey School Report Card for 2006-07

The assessment tables of the New Jersey Report Card contain disaggregated statewide assessment data by school, district and socio-economic group (DFG). Using Pivot Tables and Filters, you will analyze data for 2005-06 (not 2006-07) on this sub-file to gain more

familiarity with digital technology and New Jersey school performance data. New Jersey 4 stores assessment data in a particular form that you can analyze by first using the Excel Filter command. Access the New Jersey Report Card for 2006-07, click on the assessment tab for the previous year 2005-06, and play with the file using the Auto Filter Command. Later you will be invited to design Pivot Tables, too. Try Auto Filter now.

Filtering

The Data=>Filter=>AutoFilter command in Excel is a powerful utility tool for manipulating a worksheet and limiting rows of data that you may wish to analyze. Notice that when you click on any column heading and then launch AutoFilter, small triangles representing pull-down menus appear at the head of each column, allowing one to filter the worksheet according to choices available on each pull-down menu. Apply the AutoFilter command to the assessment worksheet for 2005-06 by selecting various pulldown options. Also notice that you can select rows for certain socio-economic groups - DFG - school years, testing programs, subjects, or levels such as school or district. Try filtering your data to isolate DFG A districts and schools. Do not resave.

The Project

Unlike previous projects, Project #3 will require your team to analyze the academic performance of students at the elementary, middle, or secondary level. In particular your analysis should highlight the possible influence of school district socioeconomic background advantages on student performance in language arts literacy and mathematics. This project will give your team leeway in deciding how to apply AutoFilter and Pivot Tables to the data. If you would like to associate the New Jersey Report Card data with the names of particular schools and districts, for your own pleasure, even though naming particular school districts will not be necessary, for Project #3, please visit the following NJ site: http://www.state.nj.us/education/directory/dl_schools.shtml.

- 1) After using AutoFilter on the Assessment 2005-06 data (nj_rc07.xls), how many districts fell within each of the following DFG categories: A, B, CD, DE, FG, GH, I, and J? (*Objective: develop and demonstrate data management skills*)
- 2) According to the Assessment 2005-06 data, how many districts in each DFG offered the HSPA? (*Objective: develop and demonstrate data management skills*)
- 3) Using Pivot Tables, compare the test performance of New Jersey school districts by DFG. Do students in higher DFG groups consistently outperform those in lower DFG groups? (*Objective: develop and demonstrate capacity to handle test-score data. Do you find any evidence in the data of selective testing? (Objective: develop and demonstrate capacity to make judgments about the quality of test-related data)*)

- 4) How would you analyze and describe the chances of success in reaching the goal of 100% proficiency in language arts literacy and mathematics by 2014: mission accomplished or mission impossible? (*Objective: develop and demonstrate capacity to find patterns and to reach judgments about patterns in test-related data*)
- 5)
- a. Majority students?
 - b. Minority students?
 - c. English language learners?
 - d. Economically disadvantaged students?
- 6) Would you agree that students in the earlier grades are more likely than students in later grades to reach 100% proficiency in language arts literacy and mathematics by 2014? (*Objective: develop and demonstrate capacity to reflect on test data for different levels of schooling*)
- 7) Based on your analysis of the Assessment 2005-06 data and previous projects completed in this course, what is your opinion of the AYP targets that are set for schools in New Jersey? Are these well intended and realistic? Well intended, but unrealistic? Not well-intended, and not realistic? Not relevant to the competitiveness of U.S. students nationally and internationally? (*Objective: develop and demonstrate understanding school testing and school socioeconomic status*)

Demonstration Task (product)

Based on your analysis of the New Jersey Report Card Assessment 2005-06 data, write a memorandum to the board of education presenting the state of academic performance of the public school districts in New Jersey as a whole. Give a thoughtful account of how well NJ school districts are performing, relative the goals of NCLB and whether or not you see bright spots in the results for particular categories of school districts, testing programs, or subjects tested. (*Objective: develop and demonstrate analyses of data for purposes of making critical judgments about the performance of school districts*)